

Final Statement: OTPA S02-II-V2
December 6, 2004 – Supervisor Linda Q. Smyth

This proposed Plan amendment involves the Fairlee area located directly south of the Vienna Metro station. The proposal to modify the Comprehensive Plan to allow higher density mixed-use development on this site has been the subject of discussion and debate for more than three years. A lot of hard work has gone into the developing the proposal that is before you today. I want to thank the many people who have contributed to the public dialogue on this plan amendment over this entire time. There are also some special thanks due to individuals. First I would like to thank staff for all their work over the last few years and particularly Fred Selden for the evenings he spend in my office meeting with citizens. I would like also to thank Supervisor Kauffman particularly for his assistance in discussions with WMATA. Finally I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the Providence District Planning Commissioner, Ken Lawrence, for all his efforts in researching transit oriented developments, attending meetings, sorting through reams of testimony and correspondence to identify issues, and his thoughtful approach to land use.

Replanning of this portion of the Vienna Metro Transit station goes back to the 2001 APR cycle. The 2001 APR nomination involved a consolidation of the Fairlee subdivision that had a number of fundamental problems. Following the public hearing at the Planning Commission, I moved denial of the nomination because of unresolved issues with design, transportation and consolidation.

Subsequently, the owners of the adjoining property joined the Fairlee consolidation to complete transportation links and to address design issues. At the point of full consolidation, then Providence District Supervisor Gerry Connolly authorized an Out-of-Turn-Plan Amendment to look at the possibility of a Transit Oriented Development on this site, and added the WMATA property to form a coherent land unit. There was a large community meeting in March of 2003 where the initial proposal was presented to the surrounding neighborhoods. Following another three months of staff review, the proposal came to the Planning Commission for a formal public hearing on June 25th 2003. At that time, as Planning Commissioner, I deferred decision until the end of the summer to work with the community. Supervisor Connolly and I attended two additional community meetings, including a meeting of the Vienna Town council to answer questions about the proposal, and a meeting sponsored by concerned Providence residents. Based on our own reservations and community concerns, Supervisor Connolly and I decided that a considerable amount of work was needed and deferred the plan amendment indefinitely.

In the fall of 2003 Supervisor Connolly set up a work group representing neighborhoods that had expressed concerns about the OTPA. The work group met frequently with the applicant and planning staff for nearly 9 months between October of

2003 and June of 2004. The work group identified many issues of concern and reported on its work including a series of recommendations on the plan amendment. The formal public hearing for the revised application was heard by the Planning Commission on July 22, 2004. Through testimony and correspondence, many groups and individuals provided input on the proposed plan amendment. To allow for further public discussion the Planning Commission decision was deferred by our current Planning Commissioner, Ken Lawrence, until September and again deferred to October. During this period there were meetings to discuss concerns with neighborhood associations, the Providence District Council and members of the Fair Growth group. We also received and read many correspondences and took their concerns into consideration during the ongoing review and refinement of the proposed plan text.

During this time there were also multiple meetings between the staff and the applicant to address many of the concerns raised by residents. As a result of these meetings the proposed plan text underwent significant changes. The revised proposed text came before the PC for decision on October 13, 2004. The PC approved the draft plan and approved supplemental recommendations regarding traffic and metro capacity concerns. The formal Board hearing on this case was held October 18, 2004. It included both hours of testimony and multiple written statements. To ensure ample time for public comment, I deferred decision on this OTPA until November 15, and again deferred it to today. Following the public hearing I met with neighborhood associations and held a series of meetings in my office with representatives of Fair Growth and other residents to look at suggested revisions to the proposed plan text. Many of their suggestions have been integrated into the final proposed plan language.

There has been a broad spectrum of opinions about this plan amendment, ranging from strong support to total opposition. In looking at the issues raised during this long process, the most significant issues that we have sought to address in plan text or in other ways are the following: Metro capacity, replacement of Metro parking, school capacity, transportation and Transportation Demand Management (TDM's), environmental issues, the appropriate mix of uses and the protection of stable neighborhoods.

Metro capacity

With the signing of "Metro Matters" and the passage of our bond referendum, funding will be in place for capacity improvements including additional rail cars and the mitigation of the Rosslyn portal issue. The county and WMATA are also looking at platform and access issues and how they can be addressed through a comprehensive design plan for improvements to the Vienna station.

Replacement of Metro Parking

Many residents are concerned about the closure of the temporary parking lot and the loss of 650 spaces. A number of ways have been identified already to address the loss of parking including adjustments to the reserved parking policy, the use of satellite parking and shuttle bus service and expediting the construction of a third parking garage. We are also reviewing ways to improve bus service to the Vienna Station. Additionally, the existing temporary lot will be maintained as parking for as long as possible. However, it should be noted that with or without this plan amendment, the temporary parking lot will be closed in the future under existing Special Exception approval.

School Capacity

We have worked with Fairfax County Schools Facilities Division and asked them to provide the most detailed analysis that they have ever prepared for a land use case. Unlike previous analyses, the school facilities staff used planning information on approved, pending, planned and proposed residential development in the area. According to their analysis, the children generated by the development envisioned under this plan can be accommodated. Moreover, we have sought to further mitigate the impact of this development by converting some of the multifamily units to senior housing. We have also added plan text requiring the developer to work directly with the community and the school facilities staff during the rezoning process to offset impacts to schools.

Transportation – TDM's

The plan text now calls for repeated measurement and validation of the effectiveness of proposed road improvements and the effectiveness of the TDM targets. My modifications would require that the TDM program be evaluated in at least three stages, at time of rezoning, during construction and after project completion. If analysis shows that the TDM targets can not be met at rezoning, density will be reduced. This plan amendment envisions a comprehensive TDM program that would be phased in and would continue to be implemented in the future by the occupants of the development. The success at meeting the Plan's TDM targets will be checked through periodic surveys and reports based on empirical measurements. The TDM targets set by this plan language have the highest reduction of peak hour trips in county history. As I indicated in my Board Matter this morning (see www.fairfaxcounty.gov/gov/bos/pd/tdm.htm), transportation demand management must become an integral part not only of this plan amendment but also of our County transportation policy and land use planning.

Environmental Issues

In accordance with Fairfax County's environmental positions, this plan text calls for a development that utilizes innovative storm water management techniques including the use of pervious pavers and green roofs. Storm water management must minimize runoff to the greatest extent possible. The plan text also requires open space to exceed minimum requirements and overall should total at least 35 percent.

Mix of Uses

The existing development around the Vienna Transit Station currently lacks focus and a mix of uses. Residents can only access community support retail and services outside their neighborhood by car. The proposed mix of uses under this amended plan language will help to create a synergy of uses resulting in an opportunity for both current and new residents to walk to shopping and other services in their neighborhood. This plan amendment now raises the minimum requirement for retail services and other uses to 100,000 sq. feet, and sets a minimum square footage for office and for a full service grocery store.

Protection of Stable Neighborhoods

With this proposed plan, increased density will be focused and constrained in a core area within a quarter mile of the Metro station platform. The purpose of focusing the density is twofold: first TOD studies show that the highest percentage of transit ridership is generated by development within ¼ mile of the platform and that transit ridership drops off past the quarter mile. Secondly, the protection of stable neighborhoods requires that higher density be constrained and that density does not creep beyond clear, logical boundaries. While the core area has a 2.25 FAR that mirrors the Merrifield transit station area, the other half of this land bay is planned as transitional residential density to blend with the adjacent residential neighborhoods. These transitional densities are actually at or below the old plan text densities. Finally, clarity on the overall size of any proposal is provided by adding text that "caps" the number of residential units at 2,250 inclusive of all affordable, elderly and bonus units.

In summation, I want to recognize that there have been many issues that have been part of the ongoing public dialogue that are more appropriately dealt with at the rezoning stage or even as matters outside the planning and zoning process. I encourage and will anticipate continued citizen participation in the rezoning process. I also will expect the developer to listen to and work closely with the community through the next steps of the process.

Looking at the copies of the plan amendment text that were distributed today, you will find that there is one added modification located on page 18 where I am adding a sentence under the section entitled "Partnership with WMATA." This addition calls for the developer, WMATA and Fairfax County to develop a comprehensive and integrated long term design plan for improvements to the Vienna Metro station that will include

platform, mezzanine, circulation and pedestrian access. Staff has also brought to my attention that when the electronic graphics were inserted into the version that you received last week, three lines of text at the bottom of page 10 were accidentally deleted; this text has been restored to the version that is before you. With that Mr. Chairman, I think that we are ready to move forward on this plan amendment.

MOTION

Mr. Chairman, I move that the Board of Supervisors adopt Out-of-Turn Plan amendment S02- II-V2 as recommended by the Planning Commission and as further modified by my handout dated December 6, 2004 entitled Proposed Modifications to the Planning Commission Recommendation.

FOLLOW UP MOTION

I move that the Board of Supervisors formally initiate discussions with WMATA to develop a comprehensive design plan for the Vienna Metro Transit Station.